



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
1 April 2021

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Eighth periodic report submitted by Finland under
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2018***

[Date received: 22 December 2020]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. This eighth periodic report by the Government of Finland on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) covers the period from February 2014 to December 2020. Authorities and civil society have given statements during the preparation of the report through an online consultation on the lausuntopalvelu.fi -website.
2. During the reporting period, the new Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) was approved, the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986; Equality Act) was revised, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) came into force in Finland and numerous other measures for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the promotion of women's rights were implemented.
3. Finland submitted a follow-up report (CEDAW/C/FIN/CO/7/Add.1) to the Committee in February 2016 (implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 19).
4. In March 2020, Finland faced an exceptional situation due to the COVID-19 infectious disease pandemic (COVID-19). On 16 March, the Government, jointly with the President of the Republic, declared emergency conditions referred to in section 3, paragraphs 3 and 5 of the Emergency Powers Act (1552/2011) and the Government was entitled to exercise powers under the Act. The purpose of the Act is to protect the population, to secure its livelihood and the national economy, to maintain legal order and fundamental and human rights, and to safeguard the territorial integrity and independence of the state in emergency conditions.
5. The Emergency Powers Act may justify derogations from human rights treaties binding on Finland, however, only in situations specifically described in the Act and not in an emergency condition situation such as the COVID-19. Public authorities must act within the flexibility margin allowed by the human rights treaties, i.e. the so-called acceptable restrictions, temporarily and in accordance with the proportionality principle.
6. COVID-19 has been managed largely through the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016), by means of restrictive recommendations issued by the Government and by amending a number of laws, regulations and decisions. It has also been necessary to resort to the powers provided for in the Emergency Powers Act. The Government has issued 14 decrees on the use and continuation of powers under the Emergency Powers Act. Various recommendations and guidelines have been issued concerning, older people and other risk groups, restrictions on gatherings, public events, youth and club facilities, recreational facilities, sports competitions and series, libraries, public premises, remote work, activities of food and beverage service businesses, commuting, visits to care institutions and hospitals, and leisure travel in Finland and abroad.
7. The decrees repealing the use of powers under the Act and the end of the state of emergency entered into force on 16 June 2020.

Article 1 and 2e

Non-discrimination act and equality act

8. Reference is made to the Common Core Document (CCD) by the Government submitted in February 2020, which describes the measures adopted to promote non-discrimination and equality. It also describes the new Non-Discrimination Act (please see paras 361–364) as well as the amendments to the Equality Act revised in connection with the new Non-discrimination Act (see paras 368–369). The report also describes the tasks of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (see paras 271–274), the Ombudsman for Equality (see paras 275–278, 368) and the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal (see paras 369–374).

9. In the new Non-Discrimination Act, protection against discrimination has been expanded and harmonised as the scope of application of its provisions has been extended and the definitions of discrimination and justified special treatment have been clarified. The scope of the obligation to reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities has been extended.

10. The revised Non-Discrimination Act provides comprehensive protection against all forms of multiple and intersectional discrimination as defined in the said Act, such as discrimination on the ground of e.g. age, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. If intersectional or multiple discrimination does not fall under the definition of discrimination of the Equality Act, it can in all cases be dealt with under the Non-discrimination Act, even if it has an element of gender discrimination. Thus, these two acts which both cover all public and private activities (with some minor exceptions), provide comprehensive protection from all forms of multiple and intersectional discrimination.

11. As to the monitoring of the compliance with the equality and non-discrimination legislation, gender-based discrimination is within the purview of the Ombudsman for Equality. However, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman has the authority to handle a matter in cases of intersecting discrimination, when gender is one of the reasons for discrimination.

12. This revised legislation has made it easier for authorities to take action on discrimination experienced by women (recommendation 11). However, the Equality Ombudsman has noted that as express legal provisions concerning multiple and intersecting discrimination and the competence of public officials are lacking, it may be difficult to ensure legal protection to victims especially in the case of discrimination against women belonging to minority groups.

13. The general prohibition of discrimination laid down in the Equality Act prohibits gender-based discrimination, which includes sexual and gender-based harassment and any order or instruction to engage in discrimination based on gender. The special prohibitions regarding discrimination, the non-compliance of which can result in being required to pay compensation, also include definitions of discriminatory practices in working life, educational institutions, interest groups, and in the provision of goods and services. Countermeasures by an employer and a goods or service provider are discrimination. Pursuant to the Equality Act, authorities must assess all of their activities from the gender perspective and create practices for promoting equality. The amended Equality Act includes provisions that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression and an obligation to prevent such discrimination.

14. Provisions concerning equality planning at educational institutions and by employers including pay surveys were amended in the revised Acts. Actors required

to draw up an Equality and Non-discrimination Plan include authorities, education providers, educational institutions as well as employers who employ more than 30 persons.

15. The Equality Act was amended also in 2016 (915/2016) to include the possibility for mediation as a legal remedy and to include discrimination in comprehensive schools in the scope of compensation. Mediation is voluntary and is always based on the consent of both parties. Pursuant to the Act, the compensation sums have been adjusted in accordance with changes in monetary value.

16. On 1 January 2015, the Non-discrimination Board and the Equality Board were combined to form the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal (please see CCD paras. 367 to 376).

17. In accordance with the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government (10 December 2019-), a partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act will be conducted. An evaluation of the Act was published in November 2020.

National discrimination monitoring system

18. As to the general description of the discrimination monitoring system, please see Common Core Document (para. 377).

19. During the reporting period, reports have been drawn up on topics such as the impact of hate speech and harassment on minority groups, discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities in their daily lives and workplace discrimination. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and the national discrimination monitoring system have researched the daily situations and the extent to which persons with disabilities feel they are treated unfairly and discriminated against.

National human rights institution

20. Reference is made to the Common Core Document, which describes the National Human Rights Institution and, e.g. the tasks of the Human Rights Centre and its Human Rights Delegation (see paras. 303 to 312). The Centre monitors, among other things, the implementation of recommendations of UN treaty monitoring bodies and provides broad-scoped information on these. The Human Rights Delegation discusses and decides, inter alia, on wide-ranging human rights issues that are important in principle. In an opinion given in 2018, the Delegation requested more effective actions for the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence.

Statistics (recommendation 23)

21. The new Data Protection Act (1050/2018), which applies to the processing of personal data, entered into force on 1 January 2019. The Act does not form an independent and comprehensive legislative whole; it is applied side-by-side with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679, GDPR).

22. The Data Protection Ombudsman has been tasked with all the official duties provided in the GDPR. The Ombudsman can impose a conditional fine on a company, association or authority to enforce an order it has given on the disclosure of information. A three-member penalty group comprising the Data Protection Ombudsman and the Deputy Data Protection Ombudsmen can issue an administrative penalty payment for the violation of provisions. There are also more moderate means such as a reprimand.

23. According to the GDPR, information related to one's ethnic origin is considered data that belongs in special categories of personal data, the collection and processing of which is forbidden. However, information such as this can be processed if processing is permitted in the GDPR or in national legislation that supplements the GDPR. The new Data Protection Act includes provisions on exceptions and exemptions to the requirements for processing in matters relating to ensuring freedom of expression such as in journalism.

24. Statistics Finland produces statistics on persons living in Finland according to their citizenship, language and country of birth. Statistics on persons may also be compiled according to origin which, as in the other Nordic countries, means the country in which the person or their parents were born. Information on members of the population with immigrant backgrounds, for example according to their gender, are published in various statistics and comprehensively on the immigrants and integration page of the Statistics Finland website.

25. The National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) develops Finland's production of data in such a way that physical capacity, age and sex can be distinguished from register and population data.

26. Integration indicators by gender are publicly available in Integration Indicators database, which is maintained by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and Statistics Finland.¹

Migrant women (recommendation 31)

27. Promoting gender equality, with a special focus on women taking care of their children at home, was taken into consideration in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the second Government Integration Programme (2016–2019). The programme aimed at providing migrant women with better education and training paths to working life. It also identified the need to target actions against violence against women. As part of the Programme, gender-specific employment, unemployment and entrepreneur statistics were monitored. The programme was preceded by the first Integration Programme (2012–2015), which had a special area of focus of providing support for migrant women and girls. An objective was the better recognition and prevention of violence experienced by migrant women.

28. In its report on the functionality of integration published in 2019, the Parliament's Audit Committee adopted several decisions requiring changes in integration policy. It required the Government to draft a comprehensive action plan to address the required changes to be submitted to Parliament. It was considered that immigrant women should be placed as a special target group for integration services.

29. The Government is drawing up a comprehensive action plan on redesigning integration measures. In the current Government's Programme, one of the focal points of integration policies is to ensure the access of migrant women to integration services and language training.

30. Numerous reports and studies concerning the status of migrants, many in a gender-specific manner, have been published during the reporting period. For example, a study on the status of migrant women and men and on measures promoting gender equality was commissioned for the interim reporting on the implementation of the Government Report on Gender Equality in 2016. Moreover, in accordance with the Government's Action Plan for Gender Equality (2016–2019), integration

¹ <http://kototietokanta.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/Kotoutumisenindikaattorit/?rxid=fa3dfba-fe29-407d-8863-fff87627611f>.

materials for asylum seekers from the perspective of equality have been developed. The materials are part of the Finnish society course for asylum seekers during their employment and learning activities, compulsory for everyone above the age of 16.

31. The employment rate of migrant women was substantially lower than that of migrant men and women and men of Finnish origin. Women with migrant background are outside of working life and education more often than men as they start families at an early age, have on average more children than Finnish-born women and care for their children at home. Language proficiency improves employability of both men and women, but it is especially important for migrant women, because of their overrepresentation in service sector occupations. In 2019, 26.5% of women with migrant backgrounds, compared to 20.3% of women of Finnish origin, were in part-time employment.²

32. So far it seems that during COVID-19, the number of unemployed jobseekers has increased more among migrant men than among migrant women. However, it is too early to draw conclusions as it is possible that migrant women have been more likely to move outside the workforce than migrant men.

Statistics and reports on health care for migrant women and undocumented migrants (recommendation 31)

33. A study on health services for the undocumented titled Paperittomien oikeudet terveystalveluihin Suomessa, Norjassa, Ruotsissa ja Tanskassa (the right of undocumented persons to health services in Finland, Sweden and Denmark) was published in 2017.

34. THL has also examined the health care of undocumented persons with no health insurance residing in Finland. According to current legislation, all undocumented persons have a right to urgent hospital care including giving birth. In 2016–2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health instructed municipalities to provide the urgent social and health services required by law also to undocumented persons. Some municipalities have provided services that are larger in scope than required by law particularly to undocumented children and pregnant women.

35. The survey published in 2015 on work and well-being among persons of foreign origin in Finland in 2014 examined the use of services specifically by gender.

36. A survey on well-being among the foreign born population in Finland (FinMONIK) examined the well-being and health and experiences of social and health services among persons of foreign birth. Additionally, information was collected on employment and possible obstacles related to finding employment and possible experiences of discrimination. This information can be used to promote the foreign population's capacity to work and function, their health and to develop health and social services. The results were published in 2020. THL is conducting also other population surveys.

37. TERTTU project updated and developed a model for asylum seekers' initial health checks. The project was implemented in cooperation with the Finnish Immigration Service and ended at the end of 2019.

² https://kototietokanta.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/Kotoutumisenindikaattorit/Kotoutumisenindikaattorit_tyoll/07seurInd_tyoll_pxt_11ip.px/?rxid=fa3fdfba-fe29-407d-8863-fff87627611f.

Women with disabilities (recommendation 33)

38. The reform of the Non-discrimination Act in 2014 improved notably the implementation of the rights of women with disabilities. Among the most significant reforms was the expansion of the prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities to cover the entire scope of application of the Act. The denial of reasonable accommodation was enacted to constitute discrimination. The mandate of authorities supervising the implementation of the Act was expanded to cover also discrimination against persons with disabilities. As described above in para. 7, comprehensive protection against intersectional and multiple discrimination is provided.

39. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) entered into force in Finland in 2016 (recommendation 43). The Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE) coordinates the implementation of the Convention (see CCD, paras. 157 to 158). The Advisory Board adopted a (first) National Action Plan on the CRPD (2018–2019). A new Action Plan is being prepared.

40. A survey carried out in 2017 when drafting the first Action Plan revealed, e.g., that persons with disabilities felt that for the most part rights were realised poorly and the right to work was realised the most poorly of all rights. Persons with disabilities felt that priority should be given to implementing measures to guarantee a sufficient livelihood and social security.

41. Majority of the measures in the Finnish Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015 were realised successfully with apparent positive development in the areas of cultural and physical activity services, education and international cooperation.

42. The NHRI as a whole promotes, protects and monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the basis of an Act, in accordance with Article 33(2) of the Convention.

43. For example in 2017, funding was granted to two projects drawing particular attention to women with disabilities as victims of violence and conducted by Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen and Naisten linja's (Women's Line).

44. In November 2020, a Government-funded research call for 100 000 euros was opened to help gather information on the prevalence of violence in close relationships of persons with disabilities and to provide information on risk factors and access to services.

45. In 2014, the Parliamentary Ombudsman became the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) referred to in the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (please see CCD, para. 253). Supervision of the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities and children is the focus point of the Parliamentary Ombudsman's inspection work.

Roma women (recommendation 35)

46. The key objectives of the National Policy on the Roma 2018–2022 include improving the status of the Roma and promoting gender equality. The programme outlines concrete measures such as the drafting of a national action plan for the implementation of the Council of Europe's Phenjalipe Strategy, which promotes the inclusion and equality of Roma women and gender equality.

47. In 2017–2018, THL carried out a population study on the well-being of the Roma, which compiled comprehensive and comparable data on the Roma

population's well-being, health, functional and work ability and use of services. The study was planned in cooperation with the Roma.

48. During the reporting period, special attention has been drawn also to improving the status of the Roma by ensuring that gender-specific information on the special questions concerning the Roma, such as violence against women, are the basis for measures. Certain Roma traditions make it difficult especially for women to participate in society. According to a report by the Minorities Ombudsman (now the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman), Roma women feel that they experience far more discrimination in the scope of their daily lives in matters concerning housing and working life than Roma men. According to a report by the Ministry of the Environment, the equality of the Roma people in housing has improved compared to what it has been in the past.

49. It has been assessed that the first National Policy on the Roma (2010–2017) improved awareness and coordination of Roma matters at the national level. Notable progress was made especially in the education and early childhood education sectors. Particular challenges in the employment and adult education of the Roma were identified. As part of the first National Policy on the Roma, a report was drawn up on intimate partner violence and domestic violence experienced by Roma women and an international conference for Roma women was organised.

50. Additionally, as part of the first National Policy on the Roma, a project was implemented for the development of the rehabilitation of Roma inmates, the aim of which was to prevent recidivism among Roma women and intervene in their spiralling exclusion. The project aimed to increase awareness of the Roma culture among staff in the criminal sanctions field, and information about practices associated with criminal sanctions among the Roma. Another objective was to establish a network of contact persons for female Roma prisoners that could support the women after their release.

Sámi women (recommendation 37)

51. In 2017, the Government launched a truth and reconciliation procedure on Sámi affairs at the initiative of the Sámi Parliament. Additionally, the Government will continue its work to reform the Act on the Sámi Parliament.

52. During the term 2016–2019, 10 of the Sámi Parliament's 24 members and deputy members were women, including the President. Out of the current members and deputy members 12 (25) are women. The chair of the Sámi Parliament's Youth Council is also a woman.

53. The availability of services for Sámi-speaking children, young people and families was explored in Finland in 2016 during the Programme to Address Reform in Child and Family Services (LAPE). The right to services in their own language is poorly realised. The situation is slightly better in the Sámi Homeland than outside it, but differences between individual languages are also great in this area. Skolt Sámi speakers are in the worst situation.

54. A lack of maternity and child health clinic services offered in the Sámi language has also been observed previously in the Report of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017, as well as in the Sámi barometer, which was used as a background material for the report. According to the Report, improvements must be made to the availability of high-quality, client-centred social and health services in all three Sámi languages. Ways of achieving this end could include developing the practices related to recruitments and filling in posts, and improving the Sámi language skills of professionals.

55. The Ministry of Justice has funded a project by Lapland's Mother and child homes and Shelters, the aim of which is to increase awareness of violence against women and domestic violence as a phenomenon and on various help and support services in Lapland. A guide on the rights of the victim was also published in the Sámi language.

56. In 2016, THL carried out a pilot project on so-called remote shelters the aim of which was to create a model for the implementation of remote shelter activities in sparsely populated areas. The remote unit of the shelter in question received State funding from the beginning of 2017 and it is planned to increase the number of remote units in sparsely populated areas.

57. The Sámi Parliament has highlighted the complete lack of shelters for victims of domestic violence in the Sámi Homeland. A long distance to shelter can in reality prevent a victim of violence from receiving immediate help and safety.

Article 3

Government programmes and gender equality programmes

58. Gender equality is a key societal value and objective in Finland. Finland continuously places at the top in equality comparisons between various countries. With 74.7 out of 100 points, Finland ranks fourth in the EU on the Gender Equality Index in 2020. Finland's score is nearly seven points above the EU's score. However, between 2010 and 2020, the score only increased 1.6 points. Most of the increase (1.3 points) has been achieved since 2017. Finland is progressing towards gender equality at a slower pace than many other EU Member States.

59. The legislative foundation for promotion of equality between women and men is in the Constitution of Finland and the Act on Equality between Women and Men. In addition to legislation, starting from 2003, every Government has drawn up an Action Plan for Gender Equality. A new Government Action plan for Gender Equality 2020–2023 was adopted in April 2020.

60. Gender equality and women's rights are widely promoted also in the current Government's Programme.³ The Government's goal is to raise Finland into a leading country in gender equality. The Government aims to improve equality ambitiously in different sectors of society. Special attention is given to enhancing gender equality in the world of work and in families.

61. The Government's Programme includes also measures concerning foreign and security policy. According to the Programme Finland's foreign and security policy is human rights-based and aims to systematically promote gender equality and the full materialisation of girls and women's rights. In addition, the follow-up to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention must be promoted and enforced. Also, participation of women in peace negotiations, peace-building and in post-conflict reconstruction and in the securing of women's and girls' rights in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is to be promoted.

62. According to the programme, the possibility of women completing voluntary military service and serving in the Finnish Defence Forces will also be improved and the participation of those with partial work ability, those who are difficult to employ and migrant in the labour market increased.

³ <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161931>.

63. The current Government Action Plan for Gender Equality collates the Government's key measures to achieve objective of gender equality. It contains over 50 measures. Each ministry and minister is responsible for implementing the measures of its respective branch of administration. The action plan contains a wide array of measures to promote gender equality in working life and in several other areas. Among other things, we aim to increase pay transparency through legislation and implement an ambitious family leave reform.

64. Equality and the mainstreaming of gender perspective as part of all Government decision making were areas of priority in the Government Programme 2011–2015. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2012–2015 included measures concerning equality legislation, working life, education and prevention of violence and on work to promote equality. During the 2011–2015 Government term, a study conducted by the VATT Institute for Economic Research on the impact of tax policy reforms on the financial equality of men and women was an important initiative to promote equality.

65. The Government Programme 2015–2019 emphasised equality as Finland's strength. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 continued the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in Government. According to the final report of the Government's Equality Programme, the majority of the measures in the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 were successfully achieved and even significant progress has been made. For example, funding for shelters was increased from 2015 to 2020 by 95%, which has increased the number of places at shelters by 85%. Also a nationwide free-of-charge 24/7 helpline was established and a new low-threshold service was opened for victims of sexual violence.

Mainstreaming of the gender perspective (recommendation 13)

66. The mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the work of the Government has been promoted by setting concrete objectives related to the structures and measures for mainstreaming for ministries. Mainstreaming will ensure that the gender perspective and equality impacts are taken into account in all decision making. Also municipalities have carried out development of mainstreaming.

67. For example, of government proposals to Parliament introduced in 2019, 18% included the gender perspective in some manner. In 2018, the corresponding figure was 21%.

68. NGO submit that there have still been government proposals influencing the daily lives of women in which the gender perspective has not been taken into account at all or only briefly.

69. Starting from 2018, a preliminary inspection on government proposals to Parliament has been carried out at the initiative of the Chancellor of Justice. The aim is to increase the efficiency of supervision of legality. The preliminary inspection is an important method for the proactive guarantee of fundamental and human rights pursuant to section 108 of the Constitution. In this connection attention can be drawn better also to assessment of the gender impacts of the proposed legislation.

70. From 2012 every ministry has had its own Equality Working Group, which is tasked with the planning coordination and monitoring of mainstreaming and increasing the competence of each ministry's personnel in matters related to equality. The ministries have drafted their own equality and non-discrimination plans, which implement the principles of the Government Action Plans for Gender Equality and promote equality systematically.

71. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health coordinates mainstreaming work, provides training and customises support for various branches of administration. In 2017, THL published four information packages that provide information on the assessment of gender impacts in key Government Programme themes.

72. According to an evaluation published in 2014, the weaknesses of the Finnish model for mainstreaming are believed to be an overly simplified understanding of gender and inequality, the technical forced implementation of mainstreaming and the invisibility of equality objectives.

National action plans on fundamental and human rights

73. The third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights (2020–2023) is currently being drafted with the aim to adopt it in the first half of 2021. The Plan will focus on fundamental and human rights indicators. The indicator model will follow as possible the indicators developed by OHCHR and is intended to follow the Structures- Procedures- Outcomes frame. The work is done by a working group appointed in 2020 and overseen by the Government Fundamental and Human Rights Network that has been appointed for a third term.

100 Acts for gender equality

74. The 100 Acts for Gender Equality project (2016–2017) celebrated the centenary of Finland’s independence by promoting gender equality by concrete measures, and, in particular, increased the visibility of women in the centennial programme. The project was organised by the National Council of Women of Finland and the Council for Gender Equality. In 2018–2019 acts were further deepened.

75. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the “100 Acts for Sport and Physical Activity” campaign to promote equality in leadership and careers sports as well as the support acts for equality in sports and physical activity. Finland’s embassies and missions abroad and various departments of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs took part in the project with 150 acts for equality. Large media companies increased the number of news about women and gender equality and introduced gender-neutral professional titles. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities recommended that municipalities adopt the European Charter for Equality of Men and Women in Regional Government and to implement it effectively and published a guide for the Charter.

Gender Equality Barometer

76. The Gender Equality Barometer examines the development of gender equality and attitudes towards gender equality, as well as experiences of how equality is realised in various areas of life, for example in the workplace, in educational institutions and in the family. The 2017 Gender Equality Barometer was the sixth of its kind and was developed of more inclusive and intersectional understanding of gender and the results and findings were analysed, inter alia, from an intersectional perspective. The preparation of new Barometer will start in 2021.

77. According to the Barometer, a slow change has taken place in attitudes towards gender equality. Women and men have differing understandings on the realisation of gender equality: nearly half of men but only one fifth of women felt that men and women were equal in Finland. Men feel that society is already quite equal, while

women believe that there is still much room for improvement. Women have more experiences than men of unequal treatment in working life.

78. 38% of women and 17% of men had experienced sexual harassment during the past two years. More than half of women under the age of 35 had experienced sexual harassment in the past two years. Women said that they had been subjected to harassment predominantly by men, whereas men had experienced harassment from both women and other men.

79. Approximately one third of wage earners assessed that gender minorities would experience discrimination in their workplace. One third of students felt that study materials contained gender stereotypes.

Article 4

80. Reference is made to the previous periodic reports.

Article 5

Violence against women

Prevalence

81. Official data on the prevalence of violence against women and domestic violence is being collected nationally with information on crimes that are reported to the police as well as via the Homicide monitoring system. Statistics Finland produces data by combining the information on violent and sexual offences from the police and information from the population register by gender, age and whether a person is the offender or the victim. According to Statistics Finland, the prevalence of domestic violence increased in the spring of 2020 during the exceptional situation relating to COVID-19 compared to the previous year.

82. Ministry of the Interior commissioned an analysis on the realisation of safety in Finland from the perspectives of the genders and different population groups published in May 2018. Various indicators show that Finland is the safest country in the world, but things that cause fear and insecurity are unevenly divided between the sexes.

83. According to a study conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2014, Finland features in a group of four countries in the EU in which intimate partner violence is most prevalent. Nearly a third of women in the country have experienced violence from their current or a former partner. The study also reveals that young people from migrant backgrounds or those with disabilities face a greater risk of experiencing violence or the threat of violence than other young people. Furthermore, the study states that women with disabilities and migrant women are two to three times more likely to experience violence than women in the majority population. Migrant women are also almost twice as likely to be raped than women in the majority population.

84. The police make an effort to reach out to migrant women in the scope of their preventive work. The Strategy on Preventive Police Work 2014–2018 took into account interaction with minority groups and the development of competence in special issues related to each group. The 2019–2023 strategy enforces in particular the safety and sense of security of various population groups with preventive police work. The Hapke3 project, which was carried out at the Joutseno reception centre in 2016–2017, focused on developing the ability of reception centres to support the well-

being, health and functional ability of women who have experienced violence and exploitation.

85. In 2013, a study was commissioned that surveyed the special characteristics of the intimate partner and domestic violence experienced by Roma women and produced development recommendations.⁴ According to the study, violence against women remains more hidden in the Roma community, and there are numerous obstacles that prevent Roma women from seeking help, including the community's actions in conflicts and the Roma women's position below men in the community's hierarchy. The importance of shelters and other support services to Roma women is significant. THL has published the Be Aware and Act card for Shelter services for Roma women, who have experienced intimate partner violence. Be Aware and Act cards present an individual topic briefly and are intended as support materials especially for elected officials and senior civil servants as well as for social and health sector professionals.

86. In 2016, an extensive study was published by the Finnish League for Human Rights on honour-related violence and its community-based characteristics in Finland. The study was funded by four ministries. Additionally, training has been organised on honour-related violence for personnel of the Immigration Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service. The action plan for combating violence against women (para. 91) includes several actions to combat honour-related violence.

87. The Finnish League for Human Rights has highlighted concern for sexual offences that take place in the Jehovah's Witnesses community, which are not reported to the authorities. The Ministry of Education and Culture has requested more information from Finland's Jehovah's Witnesses on how they handle suspected criminal offences inside their community. In 2017, the Ombudsman for Children made a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture so that an expert board could assess the activities of a religious community after its registration.

Changes to legislation and policy measures

88. Finland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2015.

89. The Committee for combating violence against women and domestic violence (NAPE), which is the co-ordinating body referred to in the Istanbul Convention, started its work at the beginning of 2017 (recommendation 2 of the follow-up report). A working group consisting of mainly non-governmental organisations has been established in connection to the Committee.

90. The Action Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention 2018–2021 comprises 46 measures, which include, inter alia, measures to increase the number of support centres for the victims of sexual violence, to improve the regional coverage of shelters, to carry out research on violence experienced by persons with disabilities, and to provide law enforcement authorities with training on sensitive interaction with victims and on understanding trauma (recommendation 1 of the follow-up report). According to the most recent monitoring of the Action Plan (2020), over 40 measures have been implemented already.

91. The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published its baseline evaluation report on Finland in September 2019⁵ and the Committee of the Parties adopted its recommendation in January 2020.

⁴ Reports and memorandums of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2013:33.

⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-report-on-finland/168097129d>.

92. One of the objectives laid down in the current Government's Programme is to draw up an action plan for combating violence against women. In January 2020, the Ministry of Justice appointed an intersectoral working group to prepare the action plan, which was published in October 2020. The Action Plan will be implemented until spring 2023. The working group will monitor the implementation. An external assessment will also be carried out.

93. In accordance with the Government Programme, the Ministry of Justice is also working on the establishment of a post for an independent rapporteur on violence to be opened in 2021.

94. Provisions regarding non-disclosure by authorities were amended in 2015 giving authorities and other actors the right to notify police of any necessary information for the assessment of a threat to health or life and prevention of a threatening act at their own initiative. The purpose of this amendment was to increase the ability of authorities to pre-empt and prevent family and child homicides and domestic violence by improving information exchange between authorities and other actors.

95. As of the beginning of 2016, a fee has been charged when applying for a restraining order in cases where the restraining order is not granted (Act on Court Fees; 1455/2015). The justification for fees has been that they might decrease the number of applications submitted for the sole purpose of harassment such as those related to custody battles.

96. In accordance with the current Government's Programme, a working group was appointed in March 2020 to assess broadly the range of ways available to improve the effectiveness of restraining orders, reduce the incidence of violations of restraining orders and improve the safety of victims of intimate partner violence in particular. Underlying the appointment are also GREVIO's recommendations. The term of the group ends in June 2021.

97. The Act on Victim Surcharges (669/2015) entered into force in 2016. Offenders are charged a fine to be used to increase the State financing channelled to victim support services. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice granted 4,105,000 euros in State aid to Victim Support Finland for providing general support services for victims in accordance with the Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Profits from victim surcharges are also used for Nollalinja, a 24/7 national helpline, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention, for those who have encountered intimate partner violence and violence against women. In 2020, the funding amounted to 725,000 euros. The Government proposes to grant additional financing to Nollalinja to start a chat-service (pilot project) to improve access to support especially during the pandemic.

98. Legislation has been put in place making physical sexual harassment punishable, and stalking has been criminalised. All sexual offences targeting an adult with the exception of sexual harassment were made offences subject to public prosecution. A great deal of attention has been drawn to violence against women in preparatory materials of the Criminal Code. Thus, despite gender neutral wording of the Criminal Code, the legislation can be considered gender sensitive.

99. A new provision has been added to the Criminal Code on the aggravated rape of a child and the maximum penalty for the sexual molestation of a child was increased. The premise of the provision is that a child cannot ever give consent to sexual intercourse with an adult. The amendments entered into force in 2019.

100. The application of penal provisions concerning rape do not require in practice that the victim experienced violence, a threat or, for example, that the victim attempted physical self-defence. The provisions are worded to cover situations in

which a victim does not consent to sexual intercourse. In case-law, approximately half of cases have not involved violence at all. The provisions are also applied to residents in closed institutional care facilities.

101. Legal provisions concerning rape were revised already in 2014. The purpose was to emphasise that acts that violate sexual autonomy are objectionable by defining them as rape. Intercourse against the one's consent was legislated as punishable as rape whenever the act involved violence or the victim had been threatened even with minor violence. Also acts in which the one partner was forced into intercourse by using a threat that did not involve violence was legislated as punishable as rape. However, acts in which violence was so minor that it could not be considered enough to break the victim's will were left outside the scope of punishable offences.

102. In 2019, the Ministry of Justice appointed a working group to prepare an overall reform of sexual offences. The aim is to amend the Criminal Code so that the definition of rape is based on lack of consent and to assess the provision concerning sexual harassment. The report of the working group was finalised and sent for comments to different authorities and the civil society during the summer of 2020. The legislative work is ongoing.

103. The prosecution service has a prosecution team specialised in offences against women and children and other prosecutors who are more familiar with these offences. The tasks of the special prosecution team include providing training, advice and guidance to other prosecutors on matters related to pre-trial investigations, consideration of charges and pursuing charges. The reorganisation of the prosecution service will increase the number of prosecutors specialised in this area.

104. In 2019, THL published an online training on domestic violence and violence against women ("Create trust – Stop the violence") for social and healthcare professionals and police. Since then over 3 000 professionals have finished the training.

105. The Act on Child Custody and Right of Access (361/1983) was reformed in 2019. The revised Act includes provisions on protecting a child from violence and taking this into account in decisions (recommendation 39c). Even before, the Act provided that a matter concerning the custody of a child must be decided on in accordance with the best interests of the child, meaning that the any violence within the family that has come to light must be taken into account when deciding on custody. The importance of taking mental and physical violence that has been observed in a family into account in decisions related to custody and access will be emphasised in training and guidelines for authorities who work in this sector. In 2020, an expert working group has been appointed to draft guidelines to authorities on how to conduct the hearing of the child and take into account any violence observed in a family when drafting an expert opinion for the court deciding on the custody case.

106. According to a study by the Police University College, the police need training on legislation related to the definition of intimate partner violence and the right to press criminal charges for minor physical assaults. Police work and operations will be developed on the basis of the study. The police are participating in a project, which aims to develop and implement an electronic, web-based training package for police as well as social welfare and health care professionals on recognising, encountering and intervening in intimate partner violence and violence against women and on referring victims to services. The Police University College is responsible for planning the training as regards the continued training of police.

107. In order to enhance the preventive work and investigation of violence against women, the National Police Board has issued in June 2020 guidelines Police Action

in Connection with Domestic Violence and Violence in Close Relationship and Against Women.

108. The police take persons with disabilities into consideration in a broad-scoped manner in all their activities. This issue is addressed during basic police studies and at different seminars with themes such as sensitive police matters, equality and equity, intimate partner violence or human rights (recommendation 33).

109. The use of mediation in cases involving intimate partner violence and domestic violence is always voluntary and special discretion is used if mediation is to be undertaken in cases involving sexual and violent offences, serious or aggravated offences and repeat offences. Only the police or prosecutors can refer cases of crimes involving intimate partner violence to mediation. No crime type has been excluded in legislation from mediation.

110. In 2017, a total of 14,471 criminal cases were steered to mediation, of which 2,482 (16%) were crimes that threatened one's health or life and had taken place in intimate partner relationships. In intimate partner violence cases that were referred to mediation, 72% of suspected offenders were men and 28% women. Women accounted for 69% and men for 31% of victims. The majority (87%) of cases involving intimate partner violence were referred to mediation by the police. Prosecutors referred 13% of cases to mediation.

Female genital mutilation (recommendation 17)

111. Female genital mutilation is punishable as an assault or aggravated assault. Accountability is not limited to the actual act of mutilation, but participation in various manner is also punishable. Although legislation is straightforward in this regard, there has been no convictions for FGM. The Supreme Court has given its opinion on the penalisation of FGM (KKO 2008:93). In November 2020, Parliament adopted the Legal Affairs Committee's report where it required the Government to take measures to clarify the punishability of FGM in the Criminal Code as quickly as possible and to propose relevant legislation to Parliament during its current term. The Ministry of Justice is preparing the aforesaid measures.

112. The action plan for the prevention of FGM for 2012–2016 was based on the premise that mutilation constitutes a human rights violation in all its forms. It aimed at maintaining and developing the competence of professional staff, impacting attitudes and promoting research.

113. According to the final evaluation, health care professionals were rather well aware of female genital mutilation, but teaching professionals and political decision-makers were familiar with the issue only to some extent. All professionals wished for more training. Professionals had already started to actively implement the measures recommended in the Action Plan.

114. The action plan was updated in 2019 (Action plan for the prevention of female genital mutilation). It contains recommendations on measures for preventing the practice and supporting women and girls who have undergone it. Information on the Action Plan is disseminated actively. The short-term objective is that girls who live and reside in Finland will not be mutilated in Finland or be sent abroad to be mutilated. In addition to the number of good practices to prevent FGM that are already being implemented, stronger measures are proposed to promote the wellbeing of girls and women who have undergone FGM and to improve the quality and availability of the services offered to them.

115. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and THL have since 2012 organised an annual meeting for key actors. THL has collected data on the prevalence of FGM in several population surveys and made an estimate on the number of girls at

risk of FGM in Finland. A FGM Network, led by the Finnish League for Human Rights, provides a discussion forum.

116. The Finnish Immigration Service and reception centres continuously develop their activities to ensure that FGM is recognised and that actors know how to act in the interest of women and children in the asylum process and immigration matters. The new model for migrants' initial health checks includes asking about and giving information about FGM for all asylum seekers (TERTTU project).

117. In Finland, every pregnant woman is given a maternity card which health care personnel use as a means of exchanging information. A pregnant woman's FGM status is recorded on the maternity card and also to the Finnish Medical Birth Register in the Finnish birth hospitals. This will ensure that all pregnant women are provided information on FGM and that victims of FGM are provided appropriate and timely care and treatment and the FGM prevalence in Finland is monitored.

Support services

Shelters and services for victims of violence (recommendation 6 in the follow-up report)

118. The Act on State Compensation to Providers of Shelter Services (1354/2014) entered into force at the beginning of 2015 whereby the funding of shelter services was transferred from municipalities to the Government and the funding base became more stable. Funding for shelters has increased notably during the reporting period. By the end of 2018, there were 27 shelters for victims of violence and 179 family places (places for adults and their children under the age of 18). In 2019, the number of shelters was 28 and the number of family places 202, and in 2020, the corresponding numbers were 29 and 211. The aim of current Government's Programme is to increase the availability of shelter services to the level required by the Istanbul Convention.

119. NGOs emphasise, inter alia, that the funding for operating shelters is insufficient for improving the regional coverage and increasing the number of places.

120. The Government Decree on the requirements for the provision of shelter services (598/2015) defines the competence requirements for shelter staff. According to the Plan for the Development of Shelter Services 2016–2019, the competence of shelter staff has been improved with in the areas of intimate partner violence as a phenomenon and trauma work as well as in work with children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The activities of all shelters are 100% Government funded. The services are provided by NGO and municipal based service providers. In 2017, the amount of funding was 13.55 MEUR, in 2018, 17.55 MEUR, in 2019, 19.55 MEUR and in 2020 22.55 MEUR.

121. The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters maintains the Nettiturvakoti online service, a national support service that helps all parties in cases of violence by, e.g. providing information, as well as a chat service where one can get assistance from professionals. Support centre Varjo operates nationwide and well as locally in several regions. The aim is to increase the safety of families that are targets of post-separation stalking and violence and to prevent stalking.

122. THL has published a Be Aware and Act card on "Persons with disabilities as clients of shelter services".

123. Services provided by Victim Support Finland are not meant especially for women, but approximately 80% of its clients are women. Victim Support Finland

engages in cooperation with and refers clients to special services. All of Victim Support Finland's services are free of charge.

124. The Nollalinja helpline opened in December 2016. The service is funded with public funding. Calling Nollalinja is free of charge, callers can remain anonymous and discussions are confidential. The persons answering calls are social and health sector professionals. Nollalinja is a low threshold service where callers are listened to and given referrals to further assistance and services. Nollalinja provides help in Finnish, Swedish and English. In 2020 it started providing help in six other languages by using interpretation. During its first year in operation, Nollalinja received nearly 8.000 calls. In 77% of cases, the violent offender was a man and in 15% a women and in 8% of cases both a man and a woman (recommendation 7 in the follow-up report). In 2020 THL carried out a study on the Nollalinja's work, the impacts of its marketing and the help provided by helpline in order to further develop the service.

Support services for victims of sexual offences

125. Services for the victims of sexual violence have been developed by forming a regional care chain, which harmonises care practices and increases cooperation between professionals and equality regionally and nationally to improve the quality of care, free up the resources of staff and promote the effectiveness of care. The creation of a regional care chain will also reveal the shortcomings in the service chain and facilitate the further development of services. Coordinated services will reduce the risk of the victim falling into the gaps between services or being left completely without assistance.

126. Finland's first support centre for the victims of sexual assault i.e. the Seri Support Center opened in Helsinki in 2017. Since then, services have been extended and their availability across Finland have been improved. Each university hospital district has now a SERI-centre. The first satellite center opened in June 2020. Other satellite centres will also be established to more remote areas to increase accessibility. The support center provides medical and legal examinations for victims of rape, trauma support and guidance all in one place. The Seri Support Center is open around-the-clock without referral and provides free-of-charge services for clients over the age of 16. It serves around 320 clients each year (recommendation 7 in the follow-up report). The Seri Support Centers are intended for persons who have been the targets of a sexual offence sometime in the past 30 days. Resources are also required for support that is more long term in nature.

127. THL's Barnahus-project improves the quality and quantity of services in cases where children are victims of physical or sexual violence and co-operation between the authorities and coordination of information exchange. It partly utilizes the results of Children's Advocacy Center project (LASTA). Young victims of rape are one important target group, and psychosocial and trauma support is developed for them in collaboration with the Seri Support Centers. Barnahus-project disseminates information of good practices for working with high conflict divorce cases where violence is suspected.

128. THL maintains an extensive online handbook on services for persons with disabilities, which is a key referral instrument used by professionals. It provides information on, for example, sexual assaults and other violence against women with disabilities.⁶ THL has published the "Uskalla olla, uskalla puhua – vammaisen nainen ja väkivalta"- guide on being a woman with disabilities and violence. The objective is to provide information on what intimate partner violence and domestic violence

⁶ <https://thl.fi/fi/web/vammaispalvelujen-kasikirja/itsenaisen-elaman-tuki/vakivalta-ja-vammaisuus>.

against a woman with disabilities really is, how these manifest and where to seek help. Inclusion Finland KVTL has made a plain language version of the guide.

129. In 2017, the Ministry of Justice granted approximately 1 MEUR in discretionary government transfers for research and education programmes that aim to increase awareness on the rights of victims of crimes or to reduce the negative impacts of crimes as well as to projects that dealt primarily with violence against women.

Stereotypes and harmful practices (recommendation 15)

130. Hate speech against women has increased significantly. It is different from hate speech against men; it often includes brutal and sexualised threats of death, rape or violence and presents threatening comments about appearance, sexuality or gender roles.⁷

131. According to the Ombudsman for Equality, it is important that investigations and action plans concerning hate speech clearly include gender perspective as, e.g. the Ministry of Justice report 2016 and the Gender Equality Barometer 2017 confirm that the phenomenon is gendered in nature and that women are at risk of being targeted in hate speech. 15% of women and 8% of men had experienced gender-related hate speech. Over one fourth of women who were members of a minority group, such as a religious, ethnic, language or sexual minority, had experienced hate speech.

132. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched a broad action plan titled Meaningful in Finland for the prevention of hate speech and racism and the promotion of inclusion in society and dialogue between religions. In 2017, I say NO to hate speech challenge campaign was launched as part of the action plan. It was targeted especially at young persons.

133. The Ministry of Education and Culture has since 2016 supported a long-term project to train the management and personnel of the youth services of Finland's 27 largest municipalities to take into account human rights, including non-discrimination, as part of youth work. This is also likely to support the integration of immigrants and the inclusion of national minorities. The training is currently expanding to the youth services of smaller municipalities.

134. According to the new Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (2018), a child shall be protected against violence, bullying and other harassment.

135. In 2018, a project was launched with the task of drafting proposals for more efficient eradication of hate speech punishable under the Criminal Code and harassment prohibited by law. An expert working group with representatives from different fields was appointed to carry out the project. The group presented 13 recommendations for improving the effectiveness of measures against hate speech and online bullying and proposed that a mention of gender be added to the provision that covers grounds for increasing a penalty as well as to the criteria for incitement of hate towards a certain population group.

136. Against Hate project developed ways of tackling hate crimes and hate speech in 2017-2019. The project focused on improving the reporting of hate crimes and strengthening the capabilities of the authorities, as well as developing support services for victims of hate crimes and increasing cooperation between different actors (para. 15 c). The National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland and Victim Support Finland drew up a shadow report for the project on hate crimes that had happened in Finland from 2014 to 2018. It contained information on hate crimes

⁷ <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161753>.

based on the experiences of victims, including the need for assistance and taking into account the gender of the victim.

137. The Ministry of Justice has taken part in the EU funded PROXIMITY project, which aimed primarily to prevent racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance by improving the capabilities of local authorities to identify and intervene in hate crimes and other intolerance. The Ministry also conducts non-discrimination projects financed by the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme.

138. In accordance with the strategy for police activities and the presented performance objectives, the police focus on activities that best maintain persons' safety. This means that the police focuses more than before on crimes that are important with regard to safety but the penalties for which are mild, including crimes and hate crimes targeted at vulnerable victims (children, older persons, domestic violence etc.). A national "hate speech team" has been established.

139. In 2016, the Helsinki Police Department launched #RESPECT -campaign aiming to help in recognising and preventing sexual harassment in public places. Ministries, government agencies and NGOs participated in the campaign. In 2017, the Minister of Justice launched #häirinnästävapaa (free from harassment) -campaign and challenged ministries, political parties and organisations to take part in the work to prevent sexual harassment.

140. In 2018–2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture funds research on sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in physical activities and sports, as well as the gendered practices in coaching of sports. In 2019, Cupore, (Center for Cultural Policy Research) published a study on how to strengthen equality and well-being at work in the arts and culture sector listing 19 measures to that end.

141. As the chair of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2016, Finland carried out two studies relating to hate speech and equality.⁸ #Emme vaikene guide (we will not stay silent) was published as part of Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi's campaign against hate speech in 2017. Finland is also in the Global Media Monitoring project, which will survey gender roles in the media. The EU funded Gender Matters? project conducted by THL have produced trainings, materials and a network for journalists of gender-aware communication. The trainings deals also with stereotypes, norms and hate speech.

142. Pursuant to the Consumer Protection Act (38/1978), marketing is considered contrary to good practices, if it depicts gender-based discrimination. The Consumer Ombudsman is tasked with supervising the legality of marketing. Degrading a gender or depicting gender in a degradingly sexist manner is forbidden. When sexuality is used in an overt manner for effect and the presentation form is degrading to a woman or man, advertising is contrary to good practice.

Article 6

Pandering (recommendation 21)

143. Amendments to the essential elements of trafficking in human beings (THB) and pandering entered into force in 2015. The amendments clarified the distinction between THB and pandering offences and have made the provisions easier to apply.

⁸ Women and Men in the News. A report on Gender representation in Nordic News Content and in the Nordic Media Industry TemaNord 2017:527) and Regulation of Gender-Discriminatory Advertising in the Nordic Countries (TemaNord 2017:534).

Moreover, offences that include coercion are considered THB, not pandering, and pandering of persons under the age of 18 must, as a rule, be considered THB.

144. The aforementioned amendments improved the status of persons who are targets of pandering in the legal process. A counsel can be appointed for them for the duration of the pre-trial investigation regardless of whether the person is considered a victim. A support person can also be appointed for the duration of the pre-trial investigation and court proceedings. The salaries and compensation for the counsel and support person are paid from State funds.

145. In 2015, chapter 20, section 8 of the Criminal Code was amended so that procurement of sex from a victim of pandering or THB is punishable also as negligent. It is thus no longer required that the person procuring sex must have been aware they were procuring it from a victim of pandering or THB. The former regulation had proved to be difficult to apply and the victims were not protected in the intended manner.

Statistical data related to the sale and procurement of sex in Finland (recommendation 21)

146. Expert estimates by authorities and researchers on the number of persons who sell sex in Finland are described in a Ministry of Justice report published in 2013. According to the report, the estimates on the scope of prostitution differ depending on whether the estimate covers the number of persons in Finland selling sex at a given time or the number of persons visiting the country throughout the year to sell sex. In the report, Finland's National Bureau of Investigation estimated that there were approximately 500–1,000 persons that sell sex daily in Finland. According to the report, the number of persons permanently residing in the country who sell sex is possibly around 200–300 and probably less than 500. The report also carefully estimates that, at any given time, there are perhaps 100–200 persons in Finland who sell sex and move across borders. The report estimated the amount of cross-border prostitution by using the assumption that approximately one hundred persons arrive in Finland each week. This would mean that over the course of a year, a few thousand persons selling sex would visit Finland. On the basis of numerous studies prostitution is a gendered phenomenon in Finland as well: the majority of persons who procure sex are men and of persons selling sex are women.

147. The prevalence of the procurement and sale of sexual services at the population level has been surveyed in Finland with the Population Research Institute's FINSEX survey, which has been repeated in 1992, 1999, 2007 and 2015. In 2015, a question in the FINSEX survey was whether the respondent has been coerced into sexual intercourse in exchange for money or other economic benefits. 16% of women and 12% of men said that they had experienced this kind of coercion at some point in their lives. The responses to this question did not vary a great deal in the four surveys. 1.2% of women and 1.8% of men who responded to the 2015 FINSEX survey stated that they had sex in exchange for money at some point in their lives. The responses to this question did not vary a great deal in the four surveys.

148. In the 2015 FINSEX survey, 12.1% of men said that they had procured sex at one point during their lives. This share has decreased from 1999 and 2007. Of respondents who were women, 0.3% said they had procured sex. Of the men who responded to the survey in 2015, 2% has procured sex during the past year. In 1999 the share of men who had procured sex over the past year was 7.8% and in 2007 7% while the number for 2015 was 4.8%. On the basis of FINSEX surveys, the demand for sex for pay has decreased over the past 20 years.

Support for persons selling sex

149. In Finland, support is provided to persons who sell sexual services in a targeted manner by NGOs. For example, the Government supports the NGO Pro Tukipiste's support points via the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA). Pro Tukipiste is also financially supported by the cities of Helsinki and Tampere. It provides anonymous social and health services as well as communal activities to its targets groups, persons aged 18 and over who work in the sex and erotic industry and the victims of trafficking, who are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Pro Tukipiste has service points in three cities (Helsinki, Tampere, Turku) and it carries out outreach work in the sex industry's environments including online. Annually the anonymous services receive 13,000 contacts and Pro Tukipiste estimates that it reaches around two thousand individuals. The majority of the sex sellers Pro Tukipiste reaches are women with migrant backgrounds. In 2018, clients of the organisation's services included 22 persons identified as victims of trafficking offences, of whom 19 were women aged 18 or over and 3 were men.

150. The Ministry of Justice is commissioning a study on why the provisions of the Criminal Code on the exploitation of persons subject to sex trade are rarely applied. The study is to be completed in May 2021.

Forced marriage

151. Forced marriage is punishable as THB or aggravated THB. Also coercion as referred to in chapter 25, section 8 of the Criminal Code can in certain cases be applied. Not only is coercion punishable, but so are the handing over, transporting, receiving of or providing accommodation for a person with the purpose of seeing them enter into a forced marriage. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice has published a notice to experts and authorities on the penalisation of forced marriage. In spring 2021, the Ministry of justice will evaluate the need to clarify the sections of the criminal code relating to forced marriages.

152. A forced marriage can at present only be terminated with a divorce. A government proposal on a possibility to annul a marriage, which one party has been forced to enter into, is being prepared.

153. The procedure for granting dispensations for under-age persons to marry were abolished when the Act Amending the Marriage Act (234/1929) entered into force in June 2019; only persons who have reached the age of 18 years can marry. The amendment improves the legal protection of persons forced into marriage and gives the legal system the means to intervene in situations.

Measures against trafficking in human beings

Legislation and policy measures

154. Finland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in 2012. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) published its first evaluation report on Finland and the Committee of the Parties adopted its recommendation in June 2015. GRETA published its second evaluation report in June 2019 and the Committee of the Parties adopted its recommendation in October 2019.⁹

⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/finland>.

155. Revisions of the provisions in the Criminal Code concerning THB entered into force on 1 January 2015. Pressuring as a method was added to the essential elements of the offence of THB. Pressuring refers primarily to situations in which the offender is in a stronger position than the victim and uses this to exert pressure to persuade the victim.

156. The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings submits a report to the Government yearly and to Parliament once every four years.

157. Instances of THB that have come to light in Finland have for the most part been work-related and sexual exploitation-related trafficking. The National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings has estimated that, for example, THB related to the exploitation of persons in criminal activities and to forced marriage are becoming more common.

158. From the beginning of 2020, the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator has been under the Ministry of Justice. The coordinator heads an inter-administrative working group drafting a National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, to be published in early 2021. A high-level steering group oversees the working group. The requirement for taking the gender perspective into account in assisting victims will be included as a transversal issue in the Action Plan.

159. The National Police Board has provided instructions on intervention in THB and crimes that resemble THB as well as on providing assistance to victims to guarantee that THB offences are recognised and investigated and victims are protected. The police refer victims of THB to the National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking (Assistance System) and engages in close cooperation with the Assistance System. The police and the Assistance System have worked together to develop a training package and an online course to be used by all police departments. The police has allocated more resources for combatting THB and a new national anti-trafficking unit will start working as from January 2021.

Assistance System (recommendation 21)

160. The Act on the Reception of Persons Seeking International Protection and on the Identification and Assistance of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (388/2015; Reception Act) was amended in July 2015. The Aliens Act (301/2004) was revised at the same time. The most significant amendments were the determination of the scope of assistance of victims of THB as well as the revision of the identification of victims. As a result of the amendments, the identification and assistance of victims became more predictable and transparent and as well as more clear with regard to division of responsibility. Cooperation between the Assistance System, the police and child welfare authorities became more effective. The amendments improved also the status of children as a victims of trafficking and as a family member of a victim.

161. A person can be accepted into the Assistance System, if he/she has been subjected to something that can be considered THB. The legislation – or practice – does not require that a criminal investigation is underway or that the investigation concerns specifically THB. However, a person can be removed from the Assistance System, if he/she is not formally identified as a victim of THB or the criminal process does not proceed as a THB offence. If the offence has taken place abroad, the victim may be entitled to the services provided by the System even when there is no possibility of investigating the offence in Finland.

162. The Assistance System is maintained and managed by the Joutseno reception centre and was merged into the Finnish Immigration Service in 2017. The System covers the entire country, and only a few of its clients are residents at the Joutseno reception centre. The System has offices in Joutseno, Helsinki, Tampere and Oulu. In

2017, 54% of new clients were women. In 2019, this figure was 61 %. The Assistance System is accessed, in particular, by victims of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and forced marriage. Clients include both Finnish and foreign nationals. An average of 30–40 % of new clients each year have been exploited in Finland, while in most cases exploitation has occurred abroad.

163. Pursuant to the Aliens Act, a victim of THB can be issued a residence permit if the residence of the victim is justified on account of the pre-trial investigation or court proceedings concerning trafficking in human beings, the victim is prepared to cooperate with the authorities so that those suspected of THB can be caught and the victim no longer has any ties with those suspected of THB. However, a victim does not need to meet with these conditions, if he or she is considered to be in an exceptionally vulnerable position (recommendation 21). In practice, residence permits have not been granted during a pre-trial investigation, but instead only after the consideration of charges has resulted in a charge of THB.

164. The reflection period referred to in the Aliens Act is intended for granting the right of residence to a suspected victim of THB residing in the country without a permit. During the reflection period, the victim has the possibility to recover and consider cooperation with a competent authority. The residency of a victim during their reflection period is legal residency. Thus, a decision on the deportation of a person cannot be made nor can a deportation decision be implemented while a person's reflection period is still valid.

165. Pursuant to the Aliens Act, a foreign citizen can be refused entry to Finland, if there are justified reasons for believing that the person will sell sexual services. Thus, victims of THB, who have fallen victim to sexual exploitation may be deported, if authorities do not recognise a victim of THB and the person is refused entry pursuant to the Aliens Act.

166. In addition to aforementioned amendments, a provision was added to the Reception Act on a recovery period. A victim of THB can be given a 30 day recovery period at the same time they are accepted into the Assistance System. The period can, if necessary, be extended by 60 days. The recovery period was introduced for victims who are especially fearful or in poor physical or mental condition, and who cannot or will not engage in cooperation with authorities in solving the trafficking offence. During the recovery period, the victim can rest, recover and consider engaging in cooperation with a competent authority. During the recovery period, the investigation authority or the prosecutor do not have the right to contact a client of the Assistance System without the consent of the victim. The recovery period does not prevent, e.g. the Finnish Immigration Service from contacting with the victim concerning the examination of the victim's application for international protection.

167. A broad-scope study on the effectiveness of legislation concerning assistance of the victims of THB was published in 2018. The study recommended that a separate Act be enacted on assistance, instructions be provided to municipalities in the application of the Act on the Reception of Persons Seeking International Protection and that improvements be made to the operational conditions of NGOs.

168. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health prepared guidelines for municipalities in 2019 with the purpose of increasing expertise on THB in municipalities.

169. During the current Government's term, an act will be drafted on the provision of assistance for victims of THB, which will safeguard the victims' right for assistance, regardless of their place of residence and of whether they have municipal residence or not. Furthermore, the aim is to loosen the link between assistance and criminal proceedings.

Article 7

Participation of women in political and public decision making

Elections

170. In the 2019 Parliamentary Elections 3.1% more women than men turned out to vote. A total of 1,606,115 women and 1,461,592 men voted in the Parliamentary Elections. The voter turnout nationwide was 72.1%. Examined by age group, women were more likely than men to vote in all age groups except for among voters aged 75 and higher. The greatest difference in turnout between the genders is among the youngest voters. The turnout for women in both the 18–19 and 20–24 age groups was more than 10 percentage points higher than that of men.

171. In the 2019 Parliamentary Elections, 42% of candidates were women and 58% were men. Women made up a record 47% of elected Members of Parliament meaning 94 MPs. Prior to this, the most women ever elected to Parliament was for the 2011–2015 term when 85 women (42.5%) were elected. Men accounted for 53% of elected Members of Parliament meaning 106 MPs. The Gender Matters? -project produced infographics of key gender indicators of leadership positions in politics and of Parliamentary elections. The project also produced an awareness-raising campaign “Gender matters in the elections” and tools for political parties and Parliament to promote gender equality.

172. In the 2019 European Parliament Elections women had a 1.4% higher turnout than men. A total of 950,391 women and 871,716 men voted in the Elections. Of those citizens who are entitled to vote, 42% of men and 43.4% of women voted.

173. In the 2017 Municipal Elections women had a 3.6% higher turnout than men. The gender distribution of candidates in the 2017 elections did not differ significantly from gender distributions in previous elections, as the majority of candidates have always been men; 20,207 (60.1%) candidates were men and 13,411 (39.9%) were women. However, the gender distribution of candidates does vary a great deal between political parties. The number of women elected in the Municipal Elections has long been lower than that of men. At the beginning of the 2017–2021 local council term, 39% of chairpersons, 31% of first deputy chairpersons and 37% of second deputy chairpersons were women. Of local board chairs, 31% are women.

174. From 2017, 22% of chairpersons for regional assemblies of regional councils were women and 17% of regional board chairpersons were women. As regional councils are joint municipal authorities the provision on quotas in the Equality Act applies to them. 47% of the members of regional assemblies were women, while 52% of the board members were women.

175. The Municipal Elections in 2017 did not bring about significant changes in the turnout of foreign voters compared to the 2012 elections. The turnout of foreign voters was much lower than that of Finnish voters, internal variation among persons originally from different countries was notable and women were more active than men. The gender distribution of candidates who spoke a foreign language as their native language was more even than that of candidates who spoke Finnish or Swedish: 43.3% were women and 56.6% were men. The ratio is nearly the same as that of elected representatives.

Gender distribution of the Government

176. Four different governments have held office in Finland during the reporting period. Prime Minister Stubb’s Government, which was built on the foundation of Prime Minister Katainen’s Government (2014–2015) had a total of 19 ministers of

whom ten (53%) were women. In spring 2018, Prime Minister Sipilä's Government, which was formed after the Parliamentary Elections in spring 2015, had 17 ministers of whom six (35%) were women. Taking into account the ministers who served for only part of the term, Prime Minister Sipilä's Government had a total of 23 ministers of whom nine (39%) were women. Prime Minister Rinne's Government, which took office in June 2019 had a total of 20 ministers during its term (some only part of the term) of whom 12 were women.

177. In the current Government, Prime Minister Marin's Government (December 2019->), 10 of the 19 ministers are women. Taking into account the ministers who have served for only part of the ongoing term, the current Government has had a total of 22 ministers of whom 13 are women.

State and municipal personnel

178. In 2018, an average of 49.2% of State personnel were women. Security functions were strongly a male dominated sector (73% men), whereas teaching and education services (77% women) as well as social, recruitment and health services (74% women) were sectors dominated by women. Sectors with equal representation in 2018 included research activities, business and economy services, administrative, register and ICT services. In 2018, the average paid to State women personnel for regular working hours was 88.5% of what men were paid on average. However, in practice women were paid the same salary as men for the same work or work that was of the same value for the same employer and the equal pay index was 98.8%.

179. It is more common for women employed by the State than men to work in part-time positions and fixed term employment contracts. This is in great part due to work time arrangements made due to childcare and the more common use of part-time pension among women, as well as substitutions due to parental leaves which are more common in sectors dominated by women. Over the past couple years, employment in fixed term public service employment relationships has increased more for women than men.

180. In 2018, 80% of personnel in municipalities were women.

Scientific community and the diplomatic corps

181. Pursuant to the Universities Act (558/2009), universities have autonomy. Around 35–55% of teaching and research personnel at Finnish universities are women. Women account for 57–77% of other personnel. Women are still in a clear minority with regard to professorships (30% in 2017). The share has increased by two percentage points from what it was in 2014. The gender distribution of personnel is quite similar at all universities. Universities of technology form an exception to this, as women only make up 30–35% of their teaching and research personnel. On the other hand, two thirds of the teaching and research personnel at the University of Lapland are women (recommendation 25).

182. The majority of personnel at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are women (68%). The gender distribution in management and supervisor tasks is even (49% women). The MFA is clearly a woman dominated workplace with regard to experts (67%) and executives (75%).

Church personnel

183. No major changes have taken place in the gender distribution of personnel at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland over the past few years. In 2017, women made up 71% of the entire church's personnel. The share of women in the clergy has grown steadily. The majority of persons officiated as pastors during the 2000s have

been women. Less than half of persons acting currently as pastors are women. At the time being, there are few women in leadership roles in the church as only one fifth of parsons are women and there has only been two women bishops.

184. Compared to 2011 the share of women personnel at the Finnish Orthodox Church has increased in all areas of personnel and women make up 49.5% of all personnel. There are fewer women in management positions because the according to the traditions of the church only men can be priests and bishops. Of personnel in the church's central administration 60% are women and a woman holds the most important executive position in administration.

Private sector (recommendation 23)

185. Women have increasingly gained seats on the boards of publicly listed companies in the 2010s. This progress has happened on a self-regulatory basis. However, in the past two years this favourable development seems to have ground to a halt. On average, the boards of publicly listed companies had 29% women and 71% men among their members (2019).

186. According to a government resolution of 2015, the boards of large and medium-sized listed companies must have a minimum of 40% of both men or women members by 2020. In order to achieve this objective, companies must set and publish their aim for equal representation. Additionally, companies must publish an annual follow-up on the progress made in the realisation of these objectives and the measures they are implementing to realise the objectives. In 2017, listed companies published diversity principles and their objectives for gender representation for the first time ever. During the first reporting period, approximately 30% of companies did not report on the gender distribution of their board members. The Gender Matters? –project, inter alia, produced infographics of the key gender indicators of leadership positions in the corporate sector of listed, state-owned and unlisted companies.

187. The representation of women in the boards of state-owned enterprises has increased to 38.5% with the implementation of the objectives set in the Government's Action Plans for Gender Equality. In 2015, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health together commissioned a report from Statistics Finland on the gender distribution of the boards and management in municipality-owned companies. 16% of chairpersons and 34% of board members in companies in which a municipality held majority ownership, and 23% of managing directors were women.

188. Efforts have been made to promote women's progress to management roles, by means of projects and collaboration between several stakeholders. The TASURI project, which was partly funded by the EU, produced new information on the recruitment of top management in companies from the perspective of gender equality. In 2017, the first report on the representation of women and men in leadership positions at municipality-owned companies was published. The NaisUrat project supported the career development of women in both expert and middle management positions in small and medium-sized companies.

Participation by special groups in public decision making (recommendation 23)

189. The Ministry of Justice has developed communication on elections to increase the participation of special groups in decision making. For example, the Ministry provides information on elections in numerous different languages and focuses on the accessibility of information concerning the election in other ways. In connection to the Parliamentary Elections in spring 2019, the Ministry sent all new voters who had received Finnish citizenship a letter on voting in the Parliamentary Elections.

190. Starting in 2017 municipalities have been obligated to establish their own councils on disability pursuant to an amendment made to the Local Government Act (410/2015). This council will act as a channel for consultation and influence for persons with disabilities, their families and disability organisations. Guidelines on the accessibility of voting points were drawn up as part of Finland's Disability Policy Programme 2010–2015. The implementation of accessibility was monitored in a number of ways including via accessibility inspections carried out by the Parliamentary Ombudsman during the 2015 and 2019 elections.

191. In connection to the Municipal Elections and Parliamentary Elections, Statistics Finland collects data on the backgrounds of candidates and elected officials, such as their foreign backgrounds, mother tongue, gender, age, education, employment and family background.

The position of NGOs and civic action

192. In Finland, women are very active participants in the work of NGOs, for example as executive directors and secretary-generals. There are also many organisations, which promote gender equality, and are thus important gender equality actors in the Finnish society. All political parties in Parliament have their own women's organisation.

193. In 2017, the Government approved an Action Plan on Democracy Policy for 2017–2019, which was based on the Government's democracy policy report submitted to Parliament in 2014. The objective of the Action Plan was to respond to challenges related to democracy and to promote and find concrete expressions for the citizens' possibilities of participating and exerting influence.

Article 8

194. As regards the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Finland has drawn up an Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2018–2021. The Action Plan enforces participation by women and the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in mediation, peace processes and transitional processes.¹⁰ Around 40% of Finnish civilian crisis management experts are women.

195. In addition to civilian crisis management, gender activities have also been developed in military crisis management in accordance with the Action Plan; personnel has been trained, gender experts have been appointed to operations and operative assignments have been developed to take into account gender perspective, the status of women and the safety of women.

196. The status and rights of women and girls are also one of the key objectives for Finland's development policy, without which it would be impossible to achieve other sustainable development objectives. During the reporting period, Finland has especially emphasised the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls in its development activities. Gender equality is taken into account as a cross-cutting principle in all development policy.

197. UN Women is one of Finland's most important strategic partners in promoting gender equality. In 2018, Finland provided MEUR 10 MEUR in funding to UN Women. Finland also supported UN Women with earmarked appropriations at country level. In 2018, development cooperation appropriations amounted to 3.9 MEUR. Finland funds the UN Women Junior Professionals (JPO). Finland also supports peace keeping courses for women organised by UN Women. In 2018, Finland was UN

¹⁰ <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/160747>.

Women's fourth largest supporter with the general funding it provided. In 2019, this totals to 10 MEUR.

198. In 2018, Finland's general funding for UNICEF was 5.5 MEUR (the same as in 2016 and 2017). Additionally, Finland granted a further 1.5 MEUR each year from 2016 to 2018 to the innovation fund established by UNICEF in 2015.

199. Finland has supported the work of a gender consultant at the regional office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Addis Ababa with a total of 435,700 euros in 2016–2017. Finland has provided extensive funding to NGOs and projects that improve the rights and status of girls and women internationally and which focus, in particular, on sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as promoting legal and safe abortions. Finland supports the gender equality activities of the Council of Europe by funding prevention of violence against women, the implementation of the Istanbul Convention as well as the promotion of the rights and status of Roma women.

Article 9

200. Parliament approved the Citizen's Initiative concerning the Maternity Act in spring 2018 and a Maternity Act (260/2018) entered into force in April 2019. It includes provisions on determining maternity. The person who has given birth to a child is the child's mother. The female partner of a mother who has given birth to a child may also be confirmed as the mother if the couple has acquired the child together using infertility treatment.

Article 10

Education

201. Pursuant to the Equality Act, gender equality must be promoted in all teaching and education. Education providers have the duty to ensure that systematic work to promote equality is carried out in all the educational institutions under their administration as required under the Equality Act. The obligation to draw up an equality plan provided in the Equality Act for educational institutions was extended in 2015 when the Act was amended to apply to basic education. The amendment added 2,300 comprehensive schools to the scope of application of the obligation. The Ombudsman for Equality focuses supervision predominantly on education providers, i.e. in the case of basic education for the most part on municipalities.

202. According to the Equality Barometer 2017, students and pupils believed that gender equality was realised well in educational institutions (recommendation 25). A third of students believed that the teaching materials at their educational institution contained assumptions that women or girls and men or boys should act and be a certain way. Additionally, only 14% of all full-time students knew that their educational institution had an equality plan in place.

203. According to the current Government's Programme, the aim is to make equality plans mandatory at all levels of education, including Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

204. Perspectives for equality and equity are very important to Finnish ECEC and emerge throughout the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2018) for example in the general principles of the underlying values, transversal competences and operating culture. The Core Curriculum is a national regulation and legally binding for ECEC providers and it steers the provision, implementation and

development of ECEC as well as promotes the implementation of high-quality and equal ECEC in the entire country.

205. The Right to Learn development programmes, which aim to secure an equal start for learning by improving quality and equality in ECEC and comprehensive school education, will be implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture between 2020 and 2022 in accordance with the current Government's Programme.

206. The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016–2019 envisaged that gender and equality-aware content and methods will be included in the basic education and further training provided for teachers, professional educators and student counsellors, support will be provided for equality planning in comprehensive schools and secondary education institutions, and for the development of guidance counselling and introduction to working life periods in schools so that girls and boys become familiar with both female and male dominated sectors and for the training of experts in employment and economic administration to eliminate gendered segregation in the labour market. According to a report drafted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, there are numerous practices in early childhood education and care that support inequality, which can be corrected by drawing up a functional equality plan and developing a gender-sensitive approach to early childhood education and care.

207. NGOs have highlighted that the Equality Act does not extend to equality planning for early childhood education and care. Starting from 2010, Feminist Association Unioni has organised projects to increase equality in early childhood education and care.

208. In 2014–2016, the Finnish National Agency for Education updated the national core curriculum for pre-primary education, basic education and upper secondary school education. Human rights education has been integrated into all the areas of the new curriculum. Also emotional and safety skills studies and education related to sexual identity have been reinforced at schools.

209. It is stated in the core curriculum that the social mission of basic education is to promote gender equality, non-discrimination and fairness. The basic principles for the activities and teaching at schools are defined in the section on a unified operating culture in basic education; one of these principles is non-discrimination and gender equality.

210. The Finnish National Agency for Education provides guidance to education providers on how to draw up a gender equality plan and a non-discrimination plan. The Agency has published instructions on gender equality in the teaching sector and a guide on preventing and intervening in sexual harassment in schools and educational institutions. The Agency has also drawn up a guide for the promotion of gender equality in comprehensive education. *Mukana! Tasa-arvo- ja yhdenvertaisuustyö toisella asteella* -guide on equality and non-discrimination for secondary school students was also published in autumn 2019.

211. A key measure for the promotion of gender equality in the second Government Integration Programme (2016–2019) was to improve education opportunities for stay-at-home parents, who are often women. The education of adult immigrants has been undergoing a structural reform from the beginning of 2018 to better take into account the needs of different target groups. Two reforms will improve opportunities to participate in education especially for those who have previously been left aside such as parents taking care of their children at home. The reformed basic education for adults which began at the beginning of 2018 can be personalised at different stages. Additionally, liberal adult education institutions have launched a new training option for immigrants, which provides the opportunity, especially for parents taking care of

their children at home, to learn to read and write and to study Finnish/Swedish in situations where the objective is not to complete a full basic education.

212. The aim of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's Participating in Finland (Osallisena Suomessa) project was to develop integration education for immigrants. In connection with the project, language and society studies intended for immigrant parents who took care of their children at home were also developed, this applied predominantly to mothers.

213. Of persons between 15 to 74 years who are employed, women are clearly more educated than men. Women have accounted for over half of university students for quite some time. More women than men also complete university degrees and doctoral degrees. Also the majority of students and graduates of the universities of applied sciences are women. Fields of study are still segregated by gender at both universities and universities of applied sciences: men make up the clear majority in technology fields, while there are significantly more women than men in the social and health sectors and in the humane sciences and education.

214. Gender equality and non-discrimination is promoted in conscript training. Military service includes a gender equality and non-discrimination lesson during the basic training term as well as a lesson on intimate partner violence during the special training term.

Labour markets (recommendation 25)

215. Reducing the segregation of the labour market into female and male fields and professions is accomplished by better integration of this perspective in the development of labour force and business services and by providing experts in the economic affairs and employment administration with more training related to desegregation.

216. The Government has had several projects to minimise the segregation of working life, such as the SEGLI project which studies how different practices at educational institutions influence the understanding of young persons on the profession and study paths that are suitable for them, either working to eliminate segregation or strengthening it. The Purkutalkoot research project examined the background factors that influence a young persons' gender specific study choices. The Poikien osaaminen research project looked into the factors that lead to different areas of learning for boys and girls. In 2017, funding was also granted to the national SetSTOP project, which aims to develop content for teacher education in Finland related to gender equality planning and equality work.

217. In 2017, Statistics Finland studied the impact of changes in the labour market on the position of women and men in the labour market and on equal pay in the municipal sector 1995–2013. According to the study, changes in sectoral and industrial structures have significantly cut down the pay gap between women and men, especially for those who work for the State. The impacts have remained significantly smaller in the municipal sector. Professions are still divided strongly into women's and men's professions both in the municipal sector and in Government jobs. The segregation of professions between the sexes is still a key factor maintaining the pay gap in both sectors.

218. In 2017, the European Institute for Gender Equality carried out the "Gender budgeting in the activities of the European Social Fund" project. The project examined the extent to which Finland has taken the gender equality perspective into account in structural fund operations and other Government budgeting.

219. The core curriculum and equality guides steer how teaching personnel can encourage and support students in making choices related to working life, subject choices and further education without gender bound roles or expectations. The guide “Tasa-arvotyö on taitolaji” on the promotion of gender equality in basic education published by the National Agency for Education is a concrete action for the elimination of gender segregation, gender stereotypes and structural obstacles when choosing a profession.

Article 11

Equality in the world of work

220. One of the priority areas of the current Government’s programme is equality in working life and in families. For example, the gender pay gap will be narrowed and legislation will be further specified on fixed-term employment relationships and explore how to improve the employment security of employees returning from family leave.

221. The long-term objective is to reduce the pay gap between men and women, achieve a more balanced distribution of the sexes in various professions, attain a more balanced division of childcare in families and achieve a family leave system that meets with the needs of diverse families. An effort will be made to improve the employment of women who are members of ethnic or other minorities. An effort was also be made to ensure that starting a family will not weaken the labour market status of a parent. A pilot was conducted to support the return of persons who had been on family leave to the labour force, in which career and jobseeking coaching was provided at family centres.

222. The Equality Act explicitly forbids discrimination of an employee on the basis of pregnancy or family leave. Discrimination based on pregnancy or family leave has been the most common category of suspected discrimination cases reported to the Ombudsman for Equality. In 2017, the Ombudsman for Equality launched a campaign against pregnancy discrimination. As part of the campaign a website that provides information on the rights of employees and instructions for both employees and employers was opened. In addition, in 2018 the Edelläkävijä (Forerunner) campaign was launched. The campaign encourages employers to develop their family-friendly practices and employer image. The most family-friendly employers were awarded the title ‘Forerunner’.

223. According to the 2017 Equality Barometer, a growing number of wage earners felt that gender equality was realised exceptionally well in their workplace; 36% of women and 42% of men felt this way (recommendation 27).

224. The average pay gap, the disadvantage caused by temporary or part-time work and their gendered nature as well as segregation in working life are still challenges that limit gender equality in working life in Finland. The challenge faced by the Finnish labour market is the differences in the average pay for women and men caused by segregation of the labour market. In spite of differences in average pay, according to information from employer organisations, equal pay between women and men is realised very well in all labour market sectors. On the basis of studies conducted in 2014, Finland’s most woman-dominated sector is health and social services, where women make up 87% of the personnel. The most male-dominant sectors in Finland are construction (8% women) and the transportation and storage sector (23% women). Progress has been made in mitigating the segregation of professions by gender for example in public employment and business (TE) services.

225. According to a labour force study by Statistics Finland, in 2011 19% of wage earners who were women and 9% of those who were men were in part-time work. In 2017, 21% of women and 10% of men were in part-time work. Undesired part-time work was more common among women. In 2017 women responded that the most common reason for working part time was the lack of full-time work. The most common reason given by men for part-time work was studies.

Gender pay gap (recommendation 27)

226. The gender pay gap in Finland between men and women is on average 16% in all labour sectors. During the 2006–2015 Equal Pay Programmes the pay gap reduced from 20% to 17%. The key objective of the 2016–2019 Equal Pay Programme was to continue the previous progress so that the gap in average pay reduces to 12% by 2025.

227. There are numerous reasons for the pay gap, such as the strong division between women and men in the labour market and education. The female-dominated occupations and industries systemically have lower wages when compared to male-dominated occupations and industries. Additionally, fixed-term employment, long family leaves and the uneven distribution of family responsibilities affect women's opportunities for career and wage advancement.

228. Finland is promoting equal pay in a goal-oriented manner. Legislation specifically forbids pay discrimination. Equal pay is included in the Government Programme and the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality as a priority and in addition to this Finland is implementing trilateral equal pay programmes. The gender pay gap has become smaller with employment contract solutions and pay systems, by monetary and mixed raises and measures specified in collective agreements, workplace-specific gender equality plans and, with support provided for women's career paths and by developing projects that will minimise segregation and allow for the more balanced division of family leaves.

229. In accordance with the Equality Act, if the number of staff in the service of the employer is regularly 30 or more, the employer is to draw up an equality plan at least once every two years. The equality plan pays attention particularly to wages and other terms of employment, determines the equality promoting measures at the workplace and includes a pay survey. There are 7,000–8,000 employers and 3,000 educational institutions under the obligation to draw up a gender equality plan. Based on the inspection practices of the Ombudsman for Equality, there is still a need for improvement in the quality of pay surveys and in gender equality planning in its entirety. In 2020, also the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published a report on gender equality planning and pay surveys in the private and public sector. The conclusion was the same; the main problems concern the frequency and quality of pay surveys and quality of equality plans. Co-operation with the staff, pay comparisons, processing of pay data and concrete measures should be improved.

230. The current Government's Programme has a strong commitment to increasing pay transparency in all sectors. As stated in the Programme, a legislative working group will discuss about access to pay information in three levels: 1) individual employees, 2) staff representatives and 3) staff. The working group is going to draft a legislative proposal on these themes in 2021.

231. The Programme puts great emphasis on equal pay for equal work. The gender pay gap will be bridged in 2020–2023 with an extensive collection of measures that includes various research and development projects and the shared actions of the Government and central labour market organisations (the tripartite Equal Pay Programme). Research and development projects concern the development of the pay

systems to better support equal pay for work of equal value, and gender impact assessment of the main collective agreements.

Reconciliation of work and family life (recommendation 27)

232. A legislative amendment, under which a father is entitled to paternity allowance paid for at most 54 working days in total and which cannot be transferred to the other parent, entered into force at the beginning of 2013. If a father does not exercise this right, it is forfeited. Under the amendment, the entitlement to paternity allowance is no longer tied to parental allowance, and neither does it reduce the number of days during which the parents are entitled to parental allowance. The paternity allowance must be used before the child turns 2. Family leaves consist of the mother's maternity allowance period (105 working days), the parental allowance period (158 working days), which may be taken by either the father or the mother, and the father's paternal allowance period (54 working days).

233. In 2017, THL published an extensive study on the use and equality of family leaves. The study found that the development of family leaves is topical due to changes in working life and the increased visibility of diversity in families. Although the use of paternity leave by fathers has increased, women still took the largest share of family leaves. In 2016, 90.5% of family leave allowance days were taken by women. Women accounted for 93% of those who receive home care allowance.

234. In 2017, respondents to the Equality Barometer said they believed it was easier for women to take family leave than for men. This belief was held most strongly by employees in the private sector. Private sector employees believed more often than those in the public sector that it was more difficult for men to take family leave. The barometer shows that families felt that men are also responsible for caring for children.

235. An effort has been made to find solutions to the uneven distribution of family leaves. The current Government is committed to implementing a family leave reform together with labour market organisations. The Government's objective is for family leave and responsibility for childcare to be divided more evenly between both parents in a family, to improve equality and non-discrimination in the workplace and to reduce the gender wage gap. The choices offered to families and flexibility concerning family leaves will be increased. The reform will be implemented in a manner that applies fairly and equally to everyone including diverse families and takes into account different forms of entrepreneurship. The reform must be implemented so that the same quota applies to the number of months allocated for fathers and mothers. The number of earnings-related family leaves allocated for fathers will be increased without reducing the amount allocated to mothers at present. Additionally, family leaves must include a family leave period of the family's own choosing. Both parents will be paid a higher earnings-related portion in the same manner as with the current mother's share. The reform must meet with all the requirements laid down in the Pregnant Workers Directive and the Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers. Home-care allowance will remain at its present level.

Changes to family leave

236. The Government has improved the right of diverse families to parental allowance and increased the minimum levels of daily allowance.

237. The most recent amendment to the legal provisions on parental allowance in the Health Insurance Act entered into force on 1 March 2017. The provisions were amended so that the female spouse or wife of a child's birth mother has the right to parental or paternity allowance with the same criteria as a birth mother's male spouse or husband. The same parental allowance provisions now apply to couples in registered partnerships as to married couples. A married same sex couple that adopts a child together have now the right to one period of paternity allowance. Additionally, the Act was amended so that the father of a child who has custody is not required to be currently married or cohabiting or have previously been married or cohabiting with the child's birth mother in order to receive a parental or paternity allowance.

238. As part of the 2019–2022 Government Public Finances Plan, the Government has decided to improve non-discrimination in the parental allowance system. In order to reduce inequality and place emphasis on the primary subsidy, at the beginning of 2019 the Government increased the minimum allowances specified in the Health Insurance Act to the same level as the labour market subsidy. The Government further increased the minimum allowances by EUR 20 at the beginning of 2020. This means that the social security of families with small children who have the lowest income will improve. Amendment to extend the parental allowance period for adoptive parents to 233 days starting from the day the parent takes physical custody of the child entered into force in April 2019.

239. In 2019, the right to parental allowance was extended to all adoptive parents outside the child's family regardless of what age the child is. The sum of an adoption grant was increased at the same time. The right to parental allowance for single mothers and single parents adopting a child was also extended. Additionally, the paternal allowance period for fathers in families with numerous children born at one time was extended. An amendment was made to the Health Insurance Act so that the position of elected officials in municipal and regional are not considered salaried jobs, which means that only the minimum sum of parental allowance would be paid. To clarify legislation, an amendment was made to the provision concerning the right to a maternity allowance gender neutral so that the person giving birth to the child can be legally also a man.

Status of immigrants and other minority groups in working life (recommendation 27)

240. Notable differences have been observed in the employment of immigrant men and women. During their five first years living in Finland, 28% of men had worked or studied every year, but the corresponding figure was only 16% for women. Integration and education increase employment among women over the years, but the employment rate of migrant women does not usually reach the same level as that of men. The employment rate of migrants and those who speak a foreign language as their mother tongue is lower than that of persons who speak either Finnish or Swedish. Migrants are employed more often than the rest of the population in jobs that do not correspond with their education.

Article 12

Promotion of health

241. The School Health Survey produces information on the wellbeing, health, school attendance, studies and participation of children and young persons as well as on how well they receive assistance and their needs are met. Information is collected

from comprehensive school pupils and upper secondary school and vocational education and training students. Starting from 2017, the survey was expanded to also cover all fourth and fifth year comprehensive school pupils and their guardians. The survey is conducted every two years.

242. Starting from 2017, monitoring the equality of children and young persons with regard to well-being has been better than before because a person's immigrant background and functional limitations were added to the survey's background factors. The survey, which was previously conducted in Finnish and Swedish added English, Russian and Sámi to its language options in 2017 making it possible for an even larger number of young persons to respond. The results of the survey are available itemised by gender.

243. According to the School Health Survey 2019, over 30% of girls in year 8 and year 9 of comprehensive school, in vocational education and training and in upper secondary school had experienced sexual harassment over the past year. According to the survey, experiences of sexual harassment were far more common among members of gender and sexual orientation minorities, those with foreign backgrounds, the persons with disabilities and young persons who had been placed outside their homes. According to the survey, some young persons also received no support after experiencing sexual harassment or violence.

244. THL has recommended free contraception for young persons for quite some time, but this has only been implemented in 35 municipalities so far. The largest number abortions are performed on women between the ages of 20 and 25, but free-of-charge contraception rarely extends to this age group. The price range for contraception as well as the fact that free-of-charge contraception is not provided by all municipalities causes inequality between young persons. The number of abortions performed in Finland has been declining for a long time, but they are increasingly most common among the poorly educated and those with low income.

245. Numerous campaigns and projects related to the mental health of young persons have been carried out in Finland during the reporting period. In 2016, the Sekasin campaign was implemented for young persons. It aimed at bringing mental health issues experienced by young persons into public discussion and to lower the threshold to discuss these. As part of the campaign, a drama series was broadcast and a week-long chat was opened online to provide assistance, which proved to be very popular.

246. The population's mental health skills and the mental health expertise of professionals from different sectors were part of a Government key project for 2015–2019, which aimed to promote welfare and health and to close gaps in health differences. Mieli Mental Health Finland trains professionals who hold Mielenterveyden ensiapu (first aid for mental health) training courses for the public and professionals in various sectors.

247. Studies show that one in ten girls and women will suffer from eating disorders. The treatment of eating disorders is steered by the Current Care Guideline for eating disorders. According to the guideline, early access to treatment, the effective correction of a patient's nutritional state and an active approach to treatment lead to a better prognosis. Established in 2004, the Eating Disorder Association of Finland is a national organisation that represents those suffering from eating disorders, and their close friends and family. Its member organisations provide regional support. The association has a support telephone helpline and a chat that provides peer support (recommendation 15).

Mental health and substance abuse work (recommendation 29)

248. The Government's National youth work and policy programme for 2017–2019, which was based on the Youth Act (1285/2016), laid down the objectives for promoting the growth and living conditions of young persons. One of the programme's five objectives was to ensure that fewer young persons have mental health issues. The National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–2023 includes also measures concerning mental health.

249. In 2015, THL published an Action Plan for preventive work in substance abuse and addictions to support the implementation of the Act on Organising Preventive Work in Substance Abuse and Addictions (523/2015). One of the Action Plan's objectives is to develop preventive work at the municipal level ensuring that youth services are strongly involved in the prevention of substance abuse. The Programme for the promotion of well-being and health and for a reduction in inequality was launched during the 2015–2019 Government term. The aim of the programme was to increase healthy habits such as physical activity, to promote mental health and to reduce health inequalities.

250. The Non-Violent Childhoods – Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020 contains 93 national actions with the prevention of emotional, physical and sexual violence against children aged 0–17 in different growth and operating environments. The Target Programme for the Prevention of Home and Leisure Injuries 2021–2030 contains a total of 89 actions on preventing injuries during different stages of life. In the National Mental Health Strategy and Programme for Suicide Prevention 2020–2030 one of the priority areas is mental health of children and young people.

251. Well-being and support services for pupils have been highlighted in the new core curriculum for basic education as well as in the coming core curriculum for upper secondary schools. Additionally, the 'Schools on the Move' project aims to influence children and young persons in adopting a healthy lifestyle. The project is gender mainstreamed and during this Government's programme period is enlarged for 'Students on the Move' and 'Adults on the Move'.

252. Pre-primary and basic education, upper secondary school and vocation education and training pupils and students have the right to the services of a school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse and school doctor. School health care is a statutory and free-of-charge health care for all pupils in comprehensive school. The aim of school health care is to promote the health of pupils as well as to support healthy growth, development and psychological well-being in cooperation with parents, teachers and other pupil welfare. The aim of student health care is to support a student in maintaining their capacity to study, taking care of themselves, and maintaining sufficient life management as well as in maintaining and achieving health and functional ability. Mental health issues, substance abuse and alcohol use are discussed in connection with doctor's examinations, but also in the content of basic education health studies.

Verification of gender and sterilisation (recommendation 29)

253. The Government will improve the right of self-determination for persons undergoing gender reassignment. In accordance with the current Government's Programme, for the purpose of respecting the right of self-determination an Act on the verification of gender will be enacted. The requirement for the inability to reproduce will be removed from the Act on verification of gender for a transsexual person, and medical treatment will be considered separate from the legal gender

reassignment. A person who has turned 18 and can produce a well-reasoned explanation on how he/she permanently feels that he/she is a member of the reassigned gender may apply for the reassignment of gender. There must be a reflection period before gender reassignment. Also personal identification codes will no longer be tied to gender.

254. In the 2015 reform of the Equality Act, gender identity and gender expression were added as forbidden grounds for discrimination related to gender. The same is to apply discrimination based on the fact that an individual's physical gender-defining characteristics are not unambiguously female or male. The aim with these provisions was to improve legal protection of transsexual and intersex persons. Additionally, provisions have been added that obligate authorities, organisers of education, and employers to prevent discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

255. The Ministry of Justice coordinated Rainbow Rights promoting LGBTI Equality in Europe project has published a guide on promoting the equality of sexual and gender minorities. The guide is intended for authorities as well as for professionals in various sectors who meet with sexual and gender minorities in the scope of their work. It aims to make challenging situations that LGBTI people experience in different areas of life easier to recognise and to provide tools for with which professionals can promote equality.

256. The provision in section 2 of the Sterilisation Act, which restricts women with disabilities from sterilisation has not been repealed.

Articles 13 – 15

257. A reference is made to Finland's previous periodic reports.

Article 16

Marriage and family

258. In 2017, an amendment to the Marriage Act entered into force allowing same sex couples to get married.

259. The 2018 Maternity Act makes it possible for a birth mother's female partner to be confirmed as a new-born's mother in addition to the biological mother, when the child has been planned for together and conceived using fertility treatments. Motherhood is confirmed with a decision from the Local Register Office or a court complying in great part with the procedure used for confirming fatherhood.

260. According to the Marriage Act, spouses are equal and each spouse shall participate in the common household of the family and the maintenance of the spouses to the best of his or her abilities. When the spouses are granted a divorce and a spouse is deemed to be in need of maintenance, the court may order the other spouse to pay him or her maintenance deemed reasonable with a view to his or her ability and other circumstances. When necessary a spouse can be ordered to pay the other maintenance even during a marriage.

261. Finland's matrimonial property system is based on the above mentioned principles of equality of spouses and their mutual financial dependency. In addition, the system includes principles that prevent the development of financially unreasonable situations. Entering into marriage does not cause changes in the spouse's ownership during the marriage. When property is divided on account of divorce it is divided equally among the spouses. An exception to this rule is made if

the spouses have entered into a marriage settlement. In a marriage settlement spouses can agree for example that should the marriage be dissolved each spouse keeps their own property or that certain property will remain outside of the distribution of property. The distribution of matrimonial property may be adjusted if the distribution would otherwise lead to an unreasonable result or to the other spouse receiving unjust financial benefit. When considering whether to adjust the distribution, special attention shall be paid to the duration of the marriage, the activities of the spouses for their common household and for the accumulation and preservation of the property, as well as to other comparable facts regarding the finances of the spouses (recommendation 39).

Visibility of the convention

262. The Committee's previous concluding observations were distributed widely to the authorities, Parliament, NGOs, religious communities and labour market organisations.

263. In spring 2017, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs together with the Network of Finnish Women Members of Parliament, Women's Line and the National Council of Women organised a seminar on violence against women. One of the seminar's objectives was to promote the visibility of the Convention and the implementation of the recommendations (recommendations 9 and 42). The Convention's text, periodic reports and the recommendations given by the Committee are available on the MFA's website.

264. Moreover, a seminar was organized to discuss the outcome of GREVIO's report in September 2019 by the Human Rights Centre.

Agenda 2030 (recommendation 41)

265. Finland's Government has taken determined action in the implementation of the action plan for sustainable development (Agenda 2030). The priority areas of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Agenda 2030 are a resource wise and carbon neutral Finland as well as a fair, equal and competent Finland. The Government Action Plan will be updated every four years in connection with drawing up a new Plan.¹¹

266. In 2020, the Government submitted to Parliament its Report on the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report is Finland's national implementation roadmap for achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.¹²

267. Finland has reported on the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development first time in 2016, and again in 2020.¹³

268. Goal 5 i.e. the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is taken into account both as an individual objective and a cross-cutting principle in national decision making. Globally, Finland focuses its UN funding to UN organisations that are most important with regard to the status of women and girls, which focus their activities on supporting developing countries in the implementation of Agenda 2030's fifth objective. Finland's bilateral development

¹¹ https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79455/VNK_J1117_Government_Report_2030Agenda_KANSILLA_netti.pdf?sequence=1.

¹² <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162575>.

¹³ <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/voluntary-national-review>.

cooperation also emphasises issues related to gender equality. Cooperation development by Finnish NGOs extends to the grass root level and influences an improvement of the status of women and girls in many countries.

Ratification of other conventions (recommendation 43)

269. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol entered into force in Finland on 10 June 2016.

270. Preparations for ratifying the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance are under way.

271. The Government has examined the conditions for ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 1992, 2004 and 2011. Following a consultation round, the Government concluded that ratification is not necessary as the Finnish legislation does not distinguish between migrant workers and other migrants. They are protected by the same constitutional rights and human rights conventions ratified by Finland as all other migrants.

272. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers entered into force in Finland in January 2016. In Finland, the Convention's ratification necessitated the repeal of the Act on Workers in the Household, and making it possible for household workers to be in the scope of equal and fair treatment.

273. The Government considers the ratification of the Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

274. The Government will examine the possible ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

275. The Nordic Saami Convention, negotiated between Finland, Norway and Sweden, was initialled in January 2017. Prior to signature, the Convention shall be submitted for approval by the Sámi Parliaments. The Sámi Parliaments of Finland, Sweden and Norway have together made a proposal to the Governments to re-open negotiations on certain issues.
